



U.S. Department of Justice

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **U.S. Attorney Machen Hosts First in Series of Town Hall Events - Promotes Importance of Community Partnerships -**

WASHINGTON - U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. led the first in a series of town hall meetings in Southeast Washington, joining this week with other law enforcement officials, the clergy, and neighborhood residents in an open discussion about justice and public safety.

The session, which took place Thursday evening at Matthews Memorial Baptist Church, was tailored for citizens of the Seventh Police District. U.S. Attorney Machen, Principal Assistant U.S. Attorney Vincent H. Cohen Jr., and others from the prosecutors' office talked about recent convictions, including several in older homicide cases, explained the various stages of the court process, and pledged to do their best to build stronger ties to the people they serve.

Officials from the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and other criminal justice agencies joined in the discussion and reinforced their commitment to working with the community. Speakers also included Christine Jackson, founder of Torch of Hope, Incorporated, an organization she created after her son Phillip's life was tragically lost to gun violence on September 20, 2008. The focus of Torch of Hope is to help victims and survivors of crime as they go through the grieving process, by providing them with counseling referrals, life-skills assistance, and support.

Mr. Machen talked about the range of outreach efforts by the U.S. Attorney's Office, including services for victims, victims' families, and witnesses, community seminars on subjects such as elder abuse and other crimes, youth programs, and school visits. He joined with MPD leaders in urging people to come forward when they have information about crimes – saying that witnesses are critical to successfully prosecuting those who endanger and harm the community.

“The simple truth is that police and prosecutors cannot protect our neighborhoods without the partnership of engaged citizens committed to ending the cycle of violence,” U.S. Attorney Machen said today. “Too many victims and their families never receive justice because witnesses are unwilling to come forward and tell the truth about what they have seen. These town halls

give us an opportunity to break down the barriers that have too often discouraged community cooperation. I was heartened to hear from courageous citizens who are so passionate about lifting up their neighborhoods and solving problems together.”

The town hall meeting is part of broader efforts by the U.S. Attorney’s Office throughout the community. It marked the third major event since July in the Barry Farm neighborhood. U.S. Attorney Machen earlier co-hosted a screening of a documentary about the history of Barry Farm, and also hosted a step show between games of the Goodman summer basketball league.

U.S. Attorney Machen plans similar town halls throughout the District of Columbia, as well as other events designed to promote teamwork on addressing challenges to public safety.

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